

FREE WILL

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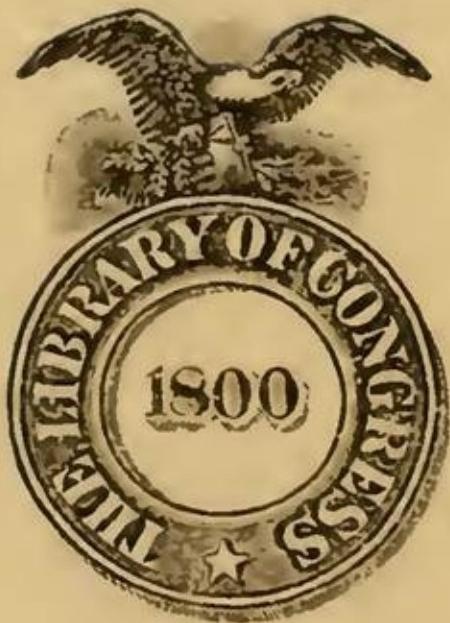
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Free Will,  
THE GREATEST OF THE SEVEN WORLD-RIDDLES  
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## **CONTENTS**

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**FREE WILL, THE GREATEST OF THE SEVEN WORLD-RIDDLES**

## Lecture 1: The Problem Stated.

IN the famous address delivered on the 8th of July, 1880, before the Berlin Academy of Sciences, the avowed Materialist and Evolutionist Du Bois-Reymond singled out seven problems, for which, he said, Science has no answer, and which will forever remain insoluble riddles: "Ignoramus et ignorabimus!"

The problems are: (1) the nature of matter and force, (2) the origin of motion, (3) the origin of life, (4) the apparently designed order of nature, (5) the origin of sensation and consciousness, (6) the origin of rational thought and speech, (7) free will.

These problems are not at all new; they have claimed the attention of the master minds of all ages. In their correct and satisfactory solution not only the "scientist" of the 19th and 20th century but each and every man is concerned. The answers to the problems form, in fact, what is styled in German "eine Weltanschauung," *i. e.*, a synthetic and comprehensive view of the Universe.

But ever since the name of "science" was restricted to the knowledge of what is measurable in terms of "matter and motion," ever since the "materialistic conception of the Universe" replaced the "philosophy of the past," there has been a wholesale condemnation of all that the sages of old offered in answer to these problems, while the problems themselves have been turned into *Riddles* which admit of no rational solution.

In the supposition that there is nothing but *Matter and Motion*, and that every problem must be solved in these very terms, without doubt the above problems must of necessity be riddles. But then so much the worse for the supposition which makes them so. For in the last analysis the discussion of the "seven World-Riddles" turns about *Seven Plain Facts*, which force themselves upon the thinking mind and lead it to conclusions which the philosopher may deepen by profound speculation, but which none the less are in their simplicity within the reach of every man. These conclusions, however, are in diametrical opposition to the "materialistic conception of the Universe"; and thus instead of the "Old Philosophy" which admitted and defended the conclusions drawn from these plain facts, a sort of "*Prohibition-Philosophy*" has come into vogue, whose motto is "Ignoramus et ignorabimus." Now styled "Agnosticism," now

“Positivism,” now “Monism,” it is best characterized by the term, “Infidel Philosophy.”

There was a time when Du Bois-Reymond thought that Analytical Mechanics could be expected to offer (in the distant future, of course,) a rational solution to all the above problems including that of personal freedom. But later on, as he himself expressed it, the day of Damascus came for him, and lo! he professed the utter futility of any solution when he proclaimed the “seven World-Riddles” and emphatically declared Free Will the greatest of them all. (Cf. Tilmann Pesch, S. J. *Die grossen Weltrathsel*, ed. 2, Vol. I., p. 21, note.)

We are concerned with this *greatest of the Seven World-Riddles, the Problem of Free Will*. The much despised and much maligned *Scholastics* have a solution to offer, which I wish to propose for your consideration. Before entering, however, upon the subject itself, I wish to premise a few remarks on Scholastic Philosophy and its method in general.

## **Scholasticism.**

Scholasticism is frequently regarded as a system of philosophy in which every question is settled by authority, whilst empirical inquiry is ignored or overruled by *a priori* speculations, and true progress is stifled by endless subtleties and hairsplitting distinctions. Possibly the term “Scholasticism” is associated in your minds with what is popularly conceived to be a typical question of the Schoolmen: how many angels can dance on the point of a needle? In fact, to many, “Scholastic” is a synonym for any or all of the following epithets: aprioristic, pedantic, rigid, dry, hairsplitting, opposed to empirical inquiry and what not. “Dry Goods and Notions” would probably be the pittiest definition of what Scholastic Philosophy is made to stand for.

How far the charges involved in this popular misconception of Scholasticism may be justified in the case of some of its individual exponents, I shall not discuss. But I shall try to present to you a concrete example of the Scholastic Method, by applying it to the question before us. Then you may judge for yourselves whether I am right in stating that Scholastic Philosophy, though deductive, not only does not discard empirical inquiry, but that experimental knowledge is its very backbone.

## **Various Meanings of the Term: Freedom.**

To proceed logically, then, let us first define the terms involved in the issue and next determine the state of the question. This is typical of the Scholastic Method, and would that this feature had been retained by modern philosophical writers.

As a mere glance at the *Standard Dictionary* will show, the term *Free* is used in a great variety of meanings. In its broadest sense to be free means to be exempt from something, and according as this something may be an imperfection or a perfection, freedom itself is either a perfection or an imperfection. For example, from time to time in the course of a scholastic year free days or holidays are granted. From the standpoint of the average college student, and especially the lover of sports, to be free from school is something most desirable, whilst the professors look on the same freedom rather as a sort of necessary evil.

But freedom is in a special sense applied to the activity of an agent, and then it denotes the immunity of this agent from some restraining influence. According to the diversity of the restraining influence from which the agent is immune, we distinguish three kinds of freedom, which should be clearly discriminated in order to understand the real point at issue. These are (1) freedom from external coaction, (2) freedom from necessity, (3) freedom from obligation. These three kinds of freedom are also known respectively as: (1) freedom of *Spontaneous Action*, (2) freedom of *Choice* or *Active Indifference*, and (3) freedom of *Independence*. The first and third kind of freedom need not detain us long; we shall explain them only in order to bring out in bolder relief the second kind, which is the real subject of our discussion.

## **Freedom of Spontaneous Action.**

*Freedom of Spontaneous Action* is the immunity of an agent from external coaction. In this sense even the activity of brute animals is said to be free, namely in as far as their movements are not the result of external physical force or in as far as their natural movements are not impeded by an opposing physical agency. Thus the wild animal of the prairies roams about freely, but a caged lion is, at least to a great extent, deprived of this freedom.

## **Freedom of Independence.**

*Freedom of Independence* is the immunity of an agent from the moral obligation imposed by a lawful superior. In the strictest sense of the word this freedom is found only in God, who alone is absolutely independent, having no superior, and who is, moreover, the fount of all lawful authority. But in the wider and more common sense of the term, we all enjoy this freedom to a certain extent, for with regard to such actions as are neither commanded nor forbidden by human or divine law, we are free and independent.

## **Freedom of Choice.**

*Freedom of Choice* is freedom in the strictest sense of the term, and is, as stated, the proper subject of the present discussion. It not only involves the immunity of an agent from external coaction, but the absence of that necessity which governs the activity of all material beings, whether they be inorganic matter, living organisms, or even sensitive beings as such. They are all governed in their operations by necessity; a necessity without which the various departments of natural sciences, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Physiology, Sensitive Psychology, would lack their basic principle, viz., uniformity of nature. Now since freedom of choice involves the immunity of an agent from such necessity or determination, the very concept of free-will has become a veritable enigma to materialistic philosophy, which recognizes but one realm of nature, *i. e.*, matter, and but one mode of action, *i. e.*, that of matter. If the will of man is free, then there exists a realm of nature distinct from and quite as real as matter; then the phantom of a spiritual soul, which was supposed to be relegated forever to the Limbo of oblivion to which the four elements, Phlogiston and the like, have been consigned, this phantom, I say, once more becomes a reality to be dealt with in dead earnest; then the pet conception of monistic philosophy, that all departments of sciences, including Ethics and Rational Psychology, are in their last analysis nothing but particular applications or branches of Mechanics, is false; then “Psychology without a soul,” the greatest achievement of materialistic philosophy, needs a thorough revision — and who can foresee all the disastrous results to monistic ideas and ideals which would be implied in all this. No wonder, then, that Du Bois-Reymond considered “free will” the greatest of his seven world-riddles; it is a veritable stumbling-block in the path of materialistic philosophy.

But to return to the definition of our terms. Freedom of choice, as stated, involves immunity not only from external coaction, but also from necessity. Such necessity might be conceived as arising either from the very nature of the will or from the moral forces playing upon it. The sensitive appetite of both brute and man is by its very nature restricted to the sphere of sensible and material good; but the rational appetite or will is not so limited; it extends to things of a higher and the highest order; it

embraces the immaterial, the moral good, the heroic, the sublime. There is only one limitation set to the activity of man's will: it can only strive after what is *good*; or at least apprehended as good. Man is not capable of a "motiveless volition," but must of necessity in all his strivings have some good in view. Nor is he free to choose *evil for the sake of evil*. Even the suicide chooses the destruction of his own life not for the sake of the evil of self-destruction, but because he regards death as a deliverance from what he considers a greater evil, *i. e.*, under the appearance of good. The range, then, of man's rational striving is as wide as the range of the transcendental concept *good*: it is all-embracing.

Free choice, however, in spite of this limitless range, might be impeded by the moral forces affecting man's rational appetite. The fascinating influence of some good in particular might be so strong as strictly, for the time being, to overpower man's will. Such a possibility is by no means excluded. But then the will in striving after such a good would not be free; the act would be an "impulsive volition," the mere resultant of the forces playing on the will, *i. e.*, character plus present motives. We shall return to this point when we come to speak of the conditions indispensable for actual freedom or free choice.

## **The Time-honored Definition of Freedom of Choice.**

We are now ready for a strict definition of freedom of choice. The Schoolmen defined it

as “that endowment in virtue of which an agent, when all conditions requisite for the performance of an action are given, can perform the action or abstain from it, can perform this action or that.” (“Facultas, quae, positis omnibus ad agendum requisitis, potest agere vel non agere, agere hoc vel illud.”) This time-honored definition, being in its last analysis nothing else than the pithy expression of what the unmistakable testimony of man’s consciousness attests as a fact of every-day experience, denotes that *perfect dominion* which our will possesses over itself, in so far as it can actively *determine its own line of action*. This peculiar endowment of man’s rational appetite is, in the terminology of the Schoolmen, called “active indifference.” Before we realize the full meaning of this phrase, it may be well to clear up certain popular misconceptions.

## **Some Misunderstandings.**

There is only *one* human faculty for which we claim freedom of choice, namely, his rational appetite or will. My eye, when opened and brought into contact with any visible object by means of light, is not free. I may close it and thus make it impossible for me to perceive the beauties of a landscape; but this does not argue liberty of eye, but liberty of that appetitive faculty of mine which controls the use of my eye, namely, my will. The same must be said of the other cognitive faculties of man, the imagination, memory and intellect. Though their operations are to a certain extent under the control of the will, the faculties themselves are not free. Again the sensitive appetite, the passions of man and of all sentient beings, are not free. If an object pleasing to our senses is proposed to us, the sensitive appetite is drawn by natural necessity towards that object. Our likes and dislikes, as far as they are in our lower or sensitive appetite, are not free. *This it is important to note*; for we do not claim freedom for our sensitive appetency, but for our will or rational appetency. The existence of both appetencies in man is made manifest by the struggle we experience at times, when for reasons apprehended by our intellect we oppose the promptings of our lower appetency. This struggle has received a classical expression in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (7:23 sq.) : “ But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” There is, I repeat, only one faculty of man which is endowed with freedom: our rational appetency or will. All the other faculties, without exception, are governed by the same necessity which characterizes the operations of an electrical apparatus. Bring about the contact of the conducting wires, press the electrical key, and the potential energy of the system will be released and manifest itself in the ringing of the bell, incandescence of the lamp, etc., provided, of course, the electrical apparatus be in order. Just so, bring the eye, the ear, etc., in proper contact with their objects, and they will act. It is needless to add, that in making this comparison I do not mean to assert that “seeing,” “hearing” and other cognitive or appetitive acts are only the release of stored-up potential mechanical energy. *Omnis comparatio nimis pressa*

*claudicat*. The point of comparison is only this: the eye and ear have no more choice in the matter of seeing and hearing than has the electrical apparatus in the ringing of the bell.

It must be remarked, however, that the actions of said faculties are sometimes denominated free. Thus we say, that we freely move our limbs, that we freely look at the objects around us. But freedom, thus predicated of the actions of the eye, arm, etc., is only an extrinsic denomination of these actions. It is not my arm choosing to move, but my will choosing to move the arm, and the same must be said of my eye, ear, etc. The movement of the arm is only an *object* of free choice, and thus by an analogous use of the term extrinsically denominated free. My will alone chooses, and therefore my will alone is *really endowed* with freedom or intrinsically denominated free.

To what extent the actions of man's faculties other than free will itself can be the object of choice, *i. e.*, how far our will can control the use of the other faculties, we do not discuss here. Still less do we enter upon the question, *how* our will controls the other faculties, especially the bodily faculties. This is a question altogether distinct from the question of free will; it regards the union of soul and body. We restrict our discussion strictly to the question of free will.

Lastly, whilst claiming freedom for our rational appetency or will, we by no means assert that its every act is free. What we claim is only this, that when all the conditions for a free volition are given, our will is endowed with the power to elicit the act or abstain from it, to choose among various objects intellectually apprehended as good. The Scholastics were most careful to distinguish between *deliberate* and *indeliberate* acts of the will, or what is the same, between "human acts" (*actus humani*) and "acts of man" (*actus hominis*) ; they went even into subtler distinctions, and that not for the sake of mere speculation, but to draw up practical rules, by which to settle one's conscience, v. g. after temptation or in the performance of important official functions, which, to be valid, must be free. We need not enter here into these distinctions and practical rules. For the purpose of our present discussion it suffices to emphasize our assertion that not every act of the will is free, because the will itself is free. For the actual exercise of freedom definite conditions must be fulfilled. What then are the conditions for free choice?

## **Conditions for Free Choice.**

The first condition for free choice is the state of *consciousness and attention*. There are of course degrees of consciousness and attention; hence there are also degrees of free choice. But if consciousness and attention are entirely wanting, as for instance in sleep, there can be no question of free choice. When we are half asleep or in a state of drowsiness, consciousness and attention are almost entirely wanting, and in that state there is at least not that degree of freedom which is necessary to make us gravely responsible for the violation of any law, human or divine. The same must be said of actions which we perform when distracted or engrossed in thought. For in that case not only some of our external actions are performed in a merely mechanical fashion, but even our mind may return to old ruts of thoughts and desires which we repudiate most emphatically as soon as we become fully aware of them. The second and most important condition for free choice is *intellectual deliberation*, *i. e.*, weighing the motives intellectually apprehended. Every free volition must be preceded by a judgment on the comparative goodness of the various objects of choice. In the language of the Schoolmen this condition was expressed by the statement, that a free volition must be preceded by *an objectively indifferent judgment*.

## **An Objectively Indifferent Judgment.**

Though such terminology, unfamiliar as it is, may seem odd to readers of modern philosophical works, still it is very precise and to the point. What, then, is meant by an “objectively indifferent judgment”? What is meant, is a judgment which proposes the pros and cons, the reasons for and against a definite line of action; which, in other words, proposes an object on the one hand as desirable, on the other as not necessary. An objectively indifferent judgment, therefore, involves *two* judgments, the one proposing motives for striving after, the other exhibiting motives for rejecting the object intellectually apprehended.

Now it must be borne in mind, that every judgment of ours, referring to the desirability of a *finite good*, is ever, at least virtually and implicitly, dual in character, expressing motives for and against its choice. Take, for instance, the judgment stating the desirability of a trip to Niagara Falls. I cannot think of this trip, without thinking of the railroad ticket that will make the trip possible for me. But every judgment which has for its object the partial emptying of one's pocketbook, is for most mortals a reason against the action which requires such a depletion. But even suppose, a good friend of mine had procured or at least promised to procure a ticket for me, there are still deterrent reasons. Leaving out of consideration the numerous incidental expenses connected with such a pleasure trip, and the fact that leaving home and friends generally has something undesirable in it; leaving out this, I say, or even supposing, that the very change of surroundings have positive attractions for me, even then the judgment proposing the desirability of the trip is objectively indifferent. For I cannot fail to see that such a trip, though desirable, is not necessary for my happiness: and this is a sufficient reason against the choice.

No finite good brings unmixed bliss to me; every finite good has some evil connected with it, be it ever so little. A walk is good, but it requires exertion; study is still better, but it involves the overcoming of the principle of inertia, which in common parlance we call laziness. Virtue is most desirable, but it involves the checking of our passions. While we perceive the desirability of what is either pleasurable or intellectually attractive or morally good, we cannot fail to see the evils connected with it. This is what we mean, when we say, that every judgment of ours

referring to a finite good is objectively indifferent, at least implicitly and equivalently. The perception of even the infinite good, God Himself, is in this life objectively indifferent, owing to our imperfect knowledge of God on the one hand and, on the other, the difficulty of checking our unruly passions.

And right here we touch the *deepest root of our freedom*, namely, our intellectual nature with its capacity for *abstraction*. If on a snow-white wall there is only a little blemish, I may turn my attention to it and neglect the rest. All finite things are of their very nature limited; and be they ever so fascinating, there is surely some defect somewhere marring their beauty, and with our intellect, capable of abstraction, we can as easily neglect these imperfections as turn our attention upon them. The infinite good, God, is in Himself goodness and beauty itself without the least alloy. *In Himself*, I say; for *to our imperfect vision* here below, which is, moreover, dimmed by the fascinating and deterring influences of the things of earth, He is not a good without alloy. Hence it is, that even in the face of death man may turn from his God and his last end to the vilest pleasures of earth. There you have the deepest root of freedom: our intellectual nature, capable of abstraction, capable of objectively indifferent judgments concerning absolutely anything that may be the object of choice. So much for the conditions of free choice.

## **Active Indifference of the Will.**

We must now explain more fully the power of choice itself. Power of choice, complementary as it is to the objective indifference of the judgment, was called by the Schoolmen *Active Indifference of the Will*. This term again, abstruse though it may sound to ears unaccustomed to Scholastic terminology, gives in a nutshell what is meant by power of choice.

Indifference is opposed to determination; active is opposed to passive. Indifference when predicated of the will may denote that disposition which we call apathy, and is popularly expressed in the words "I don't care." Thus a merchant may be indifferent in the matter, whether Mr. X or Mr. Y is elected a member of the school board; but Messrs. X and Y are not indifferent at all. To me it is indifferent, whether the debtors of the same merchant have paid their bills or not; but to the merchant it is by no means an indifferent matter, that Mr. Slow of Slowtown has not yet settled his bill due Jan. 1, 1909, and Mr. Prompt of Promptville accompanies all his orders with cash. Now, when we say that the power of choice is indifference of the will, we do not take indifference in this sense. Power of choice is compatible with the greatest habitual likes or dislikes, with the greatest actual propensity towards, as well as aversion against, a certain object of choice. As long as the agencies which produce propensity or aversion, namely, character, concupiscence, fear, scientific or moral convictions, do not nullify the two conditions of freedom, they do not destroy the power of choice. Note my statement! I did not say, they do not *influence* my choice,— indeed they do,— but they do not *destroy or nullify* the power of choice.

What, then, is meant by indifference, as we take it here? Indifference in general is that property in virtue of which a faculty is not determined to one line of action. As applied to the will, it is that endowment by which it is not restricted to strive after a certain object in particular. Indifference, thus defined, though necessary, is only a part of the definition of free will, and this part of the definition is also applicable to other faculties which are not endowed with freedom. Thus my eye is not restricted to the representation of what I actually see now, the hall and its audience; your ears are not restricted to the perception of the

combination of sounds which are the vehicle of my thought in this particular sentence; but your ears are also capable of perceiving the sounds of the next sentence, just as my eye is ready to perceive scenes altogether different.

What, then, is the *peculiar* indifference of free will? It is expressed by the qualifying term “active.” Free will is *actively* indifferent, whereas all the other faculties of man are *passively* indifferent. Eye and ear, though indifferent in themselves, are determined to a particular line of action by a *cause from without*. The waves of light which strike my eye here and now, the waves of sound that strike your ears here and now, determine the peculiar actions of your ears and my eyes at the present moment; and as they are passive in receiving this determination, their indifference is aptly called *passive*. But free will determines itself. When various conflicting motives solicit our will in various directions, when pleasure and duty try in turn to gain the approval of our will, the will itself can determine its own attitude towards the motives intellectually apprehended. It can reject or accept the pleasure, it can reject or accept the duty. The *determination*, then, to a particular line of action *originates in the will* and hence its indifference is called *Active*.

## **Active Indifference Versus the Parallelogram of Forces.**

Let us pause here for a moment to consider, how diametrically opposed this power of self-determination is to the laws of Mechanics which govern the activity of material things. A simple illustration will make this clear. When a body is pulled in one direction with a force of 5 pounds, and in another with a force of 3 pounds, you can determine beforehand by the parallelogram of forces in which direction it will go. If "willing" were indeed in its last analysis nothing but "a mode of motion," a peculiar kind of molecular vibration in some nerve-center of the grey matter of the brain, and if the "moral force" of conflicting motives, acting on the will, could be weighed in pounds, then it would be most assuredly possible to predetermine by something analogous to the parallelogram of forces, which way the will is going to be inclined. Then, of course, our will would not be free. To have something like self-determination or active indifference, we must discard the parallelogram of forces and conceive the body, thus acted upon, to take its own attitude and determine its own direction of motion. We wonder no longer, that Du Bois-Reymond was in sheer despair over the problem how to fit the stubborn fact of free will into Mechanics.

## **Cutting the Gordian Knot.**

A simple solution of the conundrum was suggested by Haeckel, who is less particular about facts. The fanatic of Monism resorted to the same expedient which he made use of when facts did not bear out his pet theory of his monkey ancestry. In the name of “science” he manufactured facts and falsified others after the principle: If your theory does not fit the facts, fit the facts to the theory. So he ruled out the inconvenient fact of personal freedom. “Freedom of the will is not an object for critical scientific inquiry at all, for it is a pure dogma, based on an illusion, and has no real existence.” (*Riddle of the Universe*, p. 64.) Consequently he crossed out the last and greatest of the world-riddles of Du Bois-Reymond; for that, which does not exist, cannot possibly constitute a riddle.

But facts are stubborn things and cannot be dealt with in such a fashion; we shall, however, return to this in due time, when discussing the “experimental evidence” of personal freedom.

## **Misrepresentation, a Stronger Weapon.**

Other adversaries of free will have had recourse to a stronger weapon: misrepresentation. Distort the doctrine of free will to a monstrous caricature, set up a straw-man as the aim of your attack, and in Don Quixote fashion you triumphantly vanquish the enemy.

An illustration of this kind of attack is the article on free will in the *Encyclopedia Americana*. Not only is the problem itself misrepresented, as for instance when the writer describes free will as a power, "of willing without motive" and a free volition as "an uncaused first act," etc., but the history of the question is also falsified. We read after an introduction, which shall engage our attention later on: "The overwhelming weight of reason, however, for 2,500 years, from the Greek predecessors of Aristotle to Jonathan Edwards, has won reluctant acceptance to the doctrine of universal determinism, or in theological phrase, of necessitarianism: a chain of causation extending to all things and back to infinity, since no uncaused first act or idea can be fancied except as part of the First Cause of the universe. It is of course never claimed that all acts are volitional or all volitions deliberate, but only that the mind at will can interject uncaused determinations among the caused. It is evident, however, that to assume the possibility of uncaused acts is to consign the universe to chaos and abolish the reign of law; that only on the theory of strict and unbroken causation (or "invariable sequence") can we reason at all concerning phenomena; that the mind must follow the same law as other entities, and has no power, nor could even be endowed with such by omnipotence, of willing without motive — that is, without a cause itself the resultant of an endless series of other causes. Indeed, as Prof. Huxley puts it, for the mind to cause itself implies that it has antecedently caused itself, which is absurd: the first mental action must have been part of the chain of causation, which surrenders the whole case, as there is no spot where it can be imagined that it was able to throw down the ladder by which it had climbed, and cut loose from causes into a region of caprice"

*[Here, as in other quotations, the italics are often my own.]*

From what we have said, when explaining the terms involved in the question, it is clear that we maintain no such absurdity as that the will

has the power “of willing *without* motive.” We insisted, that the will in all its strivings must of necessity have some real or at least apparent *good* in view; but what is apprehended as good is thereby a *motive*. We insisted further, that every free choice must be preceded by an objectively indifferent judgment, proposing at least virtually and implicitly *motives* both for and against a choice. When, therefore, conflicting motives are proposed to the will, and the will allows one to prevail in preference to others, the will does not choose *without* a motive, but it chooses *among* motives.

Still more unjustifiable is it to represent a deliberate volition as an “uncaused act” or even “an uncaused first act.” A deliberate act has a cause, both efficient and final. The efficient cause of a deliberate volition is the faculty endowed with freedom; the final cause is the motive, which the will allows to prevail. Hence self-determination does not imply, that “the mind caused itself and thus must have antecedently caused itself”; there is not the slightest trace of such an absurdity to be found in our doctrine. The will in the actual exercise of free choice has, therefore, no need of “throwing down the ladder by which it had climbed, and cut loose from causes into a region of caprice.”

When the author says, “that the mind must follow the same law as other entities,” we answer that we are dealing with a question of *fact*; but we would remind him, that he confounds two laws, namely, *the principle of causality* and *the law of uniformity of nature*, the former being an analytical principle applicable to whatever begins to exist, the acts of free will included; the latter a synthetic principle, found by induction, and just as universal as induction establishes it. If, therefore, *experience* itself teaches us that our will is not subject to the law of uniformity of nature or “invariable sequence,”

as the author expresses it, then we must acknowledge *two distinct realms of nature*, the one material, the other immaterial.

We might cite other examples of misrepresentation, as, v. g., that of Dr. Bain, who describes free will as “a power that comes from nothing, has no beginning, follows no rule, respects no time and occasion”; or that of Prof. Stout, to whom a free volition is a sort of “Jack- in-the-box” (cf. Maher, *Psychology*, p. 416), etc. But we are not charging upon windmills, and thus we unceremoniously dismiss such phrases.

## Raising a Cloud of Metaphysical Dust.

When reading the introduction to the article on Free Will in the *Encyclopedia Americana*, I am forcibly reminded of a passage in Cicero's speech in defense of Milo. In that part of the speech which is known as *Narratio*, he is to state the facts of the case, which was in plain and simple language: Milo and his servants waylaid Clodius and killed him. Now Cicero was most assuredly a master of elegant periods, which though elaborate are always clear and transparent. Here, however, clearness was precisely what Cicero did not desire. This is his account of the simple fact:

"He meets Clodius in front of his farm, about the eleventh hour, or not far from it. Immediately a number of men attack him from the higher ground with missile weapons. The men who are in front kill his driver, and when he had jumped down from his chariot and flung aside his cloak, and while he was defending himself with vigorous courage, the men who were with Clodius drew their swords, and some of them ran back towards his chariot in order to attack Milo from behind, and some, because they thought that he was already slain, began to attack his servants, who were behind him; and those of the servants who had presence of mind to defend themselves, and were faithful to their master, were some of them slain, and the others, when they saw a fierce battle taking place around the chariot, and as they were prevented from getting near their master so as to succor him, when they heard Clodius himself proclaim that Milo was slain, and they thought that it was really true, they, the servants of Milo (I am not speaking for the purpose of shifting the guilt onto the shoulders of others, but I am saying what really occurred), did, without their master either commanding it, or knowing it, or even being present to see it, what everyone would have wished his servants to do in a similar case." (Transl. by C. D. Yonge, B. A., *Select Orations*, p. 194.)

Here is the *Americana's* presentation of the simple problem, whether man's will has the power to choose among various lines of action, intellectually proposed as good.

"*Free Will.* This question is properly divided into two sections, that of the metaphysical basis and the doctrinal application; but the latter has so

deeply affected the reasonings on the former, that it is almost impossible to separate them."

"The metaphysical problem is unique, from its presenting at the outset an irreconcilable contradiction between the phenomena of consciousness and the operations of reason. In this respect it is different from the insoluble problems of time and space. . . . Consciousness appears to show us at every moment that we can dictate our actions mostly and our thoughts very largely; reason tells us that each follows on other phenomena, from whose invariable relation of precedence we characterize them as cause and the former as effect. Consciousness tells us that our will is the active agent in producing the phenomena which immediately succeed it; reason tells us that this fancied agency is an illusion and itself a part of the chain of sequences, and that the apparent relation is because, as Hobbes says, the so-called will is the last wish of the mind before determining. But what causes the determination? This involves the problem of the nature of the will as before, as well as of the 'coupling-pin' by which, if a reality, it acts on matter; if not a reality, the reason why a mental resolve is invariably followed by a physical movement or mental conception. Of the coupling-pin no acceptable theory has ever been framed; the best explanation of the association of will and act, supposing the former an illusion, is still Spinoza's, that they are twin phases of the same ultimate reality, and of necessity change coincidently. But this leaves it still unexplained why our consciousness makes the will not coincident with the act, but invariably its predecessor: we do not will and act simultaneously, but in succession."

This is what I call raising metaphysical dust to obscure a simple question of fact. In due time we shall return to this passage and analyze a few of its statements; for the present its very bewildering confusion serves only to illustrate another mode of attack on free will.

## **The Question.**

After this somewhat distracting digression let us formulate the question to be answered. Here it is: Is man's rational appetency or will endowed with the power of choice among various lines of action intellectually apprehended as good? Or in another form: Has man's will the power to determine which of the various motives intellectually proposed is to prevail and thus actively to determine its own course of action? If Yes, man's will is free; if No, man's will is not free. Now determinists answer this question in the negative; we answer it in the affirmative.

## **Lecture 2: The Experimental Evidence of Free Will**

IN order to substantiate our position with regard to Free Will we adduce three lines of argument, which may be aptly called the experimental, the moral and the teleological. Before proceeding, however, I wish to illustrate the difference of procedure in these three arguments.

## Three Methods of Proof.

In proving the existence of anything I may adopt three methods of proof. I may be able to bring the object, whose existence is in question, before you, so that by your own experience you will realize its existence; and this is the experimental proof. Thus to prove the existence of a timepiece within the four walls of this room, I simply produce a watch and without a syllogism of any kind the existence of a timepiece is proved. Now this method we adopt in the experimental proof. There we appeal to our experience of freedom.

But I may not be able to bring the object in question before you; what methods of proof are left to me? If I can show to you that there exists something which is the *effect* of the object in question, and that this effect could not have come into existence except by the causality of the object in question, then I have proved the existence of the object itself. Thus, for example, from the regularity of class lectures and recitations in this college, you may rightly infer the existence of some timepiece, which regulates the division of time in our every-day routine. Thus I make use of what is called an *a-posteriori* proof; I conclude from the effect to the cause. This method we adopt in the moral proof. Man is a moral being, capable of virtue and vice, under obligations of various kinds, restricted in his actions by laws, both natural and positive. Now law and obligation, virtue and vice, etc., suppose free will. Therefore if moral law and obligation, virtue and vice, etc., are something real and not merely subjective concepts a la Kant, then their supposition also, namely, free will, is real; in other words, man's will is free.

But even if I may not be able to produce either the object itself or its effects, there is still another method of proof left. I may be able to show the *cause*, the *root* or *source* of the object in question, something which necessarily either produces or *calls for* the object in question, something which would be essentially incomplete and serve no purpose without the object in question. This method is called an *a-priori* proof, because it proceeds from the cause to the effect, from the root to its complementary parts, from the source to what flows from it. Thus some kind of timepiece is most assuredly an integral part of a meteorological observatory, complementary to the other instruments to be found there. From the

mere fact, then, that there exists in this college a meteorological observatory, furnished with all the other necessary instruments, you rightly infer that you will also find a timepiece there, although you have never seen the timepiece. It must be remarked, however, that this particular form of *a-priori* proof does not necessarily and in every instance amount to a demonstration, but at times furnishes only a probability more or less great. To be a demonstration, it must be evident, that those in charge of the observatory had not only the means to finish their work, but could not possibly have left it unfinished.

Now this method of proof we follow in the teleological argument. We consider the root of free will, man's intellectual nature, that endowment of his by which he is distinguished from the rest of visible creation. We show that man's intellectual nature calls for freedom of his will, so that, if man's will were not free, his intellectual nature were in vain, nay more: a veritable torture to man. This proof receives additional force in the supposition of an all-wise and all-loving God.

In proving man's free will we are, therefore, in the happy position to adopt all the methods possible to prove it; and we claim, that all these proofs, not only collectively but also individually, are strict demonstrations, so that, when properly proposed, their force cannot be denied by anyone who is not prejudiced and who is willing to examine them thoroughly. We maintain that if any one says that he is not free, he speaks against his better knowledge, just as the sceptic does. We maintain furthermore that free will cannot be denied without denying some of the fundamental truths which form the necessary basis of all human knowledge. If, after due consideration of the evidence which our arguments furnish, the verdict is to be that man's will is not free, then we must declare absolute bankruptcy not only in philosophy but also in natural science; even our common sense without which we cannot perform the most ordinary actions in our intercourse with other men must go. Our position, then, with regard to free will is a very strong one: we claim not only probability for our doctrine; we are not satisfied with the greatest probability; we assert it to be not only a good working hypothesis, but a *truth beyond doubt*. Now to the proofs in detail. In this lecture, however, we shall restrict ourselves to the experimental evidence for free will.

## The Testimony of Consciousness.

I realize by the unmistakable testimony of consciousness, that very often it is in the power of my will to choose among various actions which I have motives to perform. Let us substantiate this statement first by an example of an action, to the performance of which we attach little importance.

After having given, for instance, a few hours to study in my room, I realize it would be good and desirable to interrupt my work for a few moments. I am sure I shall feel better disposed for work again after a few moments' rest. On the other hand, I realize that this interruption of work is by no means necessary for me, at least not at this precise moment; I may easily put off the interruption for a while longer. Furthermore, I realize that this change, though desirable even at this very moment, is not only not necessary, but in a way very undesirable. I am just ready to jot down an argument which at least in its present form may escape me if I divert my mind by an interruption. As a matter of fact, all motives considered, I come to the conclusion that it is preferable to postpone the interruption.

There you have the objectively indifferent judgment, proposing the comparative desirability of two courses of action: the principal condition of free choice. I am fully conscious of the comparative desirability of the actions in question, I pay explicit attention to it: there you have the other condition of free choice.

Now neither you nor even I myself can foretell with absolute certainty what I am going to do in such circumstances. I realize by the clear and unmistakable testimony of consciousness that my action in such circumstances depends on an element *strictly incalculable*, namely, on free choice. I realize that it is in the power of my will to determine which motive is to prevail.

I interrupt my study; now the weaker motive has prevailed. But I realize at the same time, that without any change in the perception of the motives I can change my mind; and at times we do, as a matter of fact, change our minds in such actions, and that without any previous change in the cognition of motives.

Experiences like this every one has. Note that I do not say that all of

our every-day actions are thus performed freely; at times they certainly are, namely, whenever the conditions for free choice are given, *i. e.*, whenever we give the motives prompting our actions that attention and consideration necessary for free choice, and that is not such an unusual occurrence.

## **At the Crossing of Ways.**

When an important action of our life is in question, we do not, as a rule, act impulsively, but stop to consider the proposed action most carefully; we weigh the pros and cons and consult others in the matter. Now this consideration of motives and this consultation of others has no other source than the intimate perception of our freedom; in fact, this very consideration is of itself an exercise of our freedom. Imagine an electrical apparatus, when all conditions for action are given, when the conducting wires are connected by the electrical key,— I say, imagine the electrical apparatus stopping and considering whether or not the bell is to ring. But *we* are able to stop and consider; and by the unmistakable testimony of consciousness we realize that it rests with us to determine what course of action we are going to take. In such circumstances we would not listen for a moment to the metaphysical *a-priori* speculations of anyone who would try to make out that we are not free. We know better. No argument can disprove what we experience, namely, that we are masters of the situation, that at the crossing of the various paths of life the decision rests with ourselves.

## **An Objection.**

But, you may say, do we not predetermine our future actions and predict what line of action we are going to take in certain circumstances? Indeed we do; but this does not militate against free will; it is rather an added argument for it. For, when we predict our future actions, we realize full well that the future is not unfolded with absolute certainty before our vision; we do not claim to be either prophets or sons of prophets. We predetermine and predict our future actions, because we know by experience that the future event will depend on our free choice. We know furthermore that it will rest with us to change our mind; many a resolution of ours concerning our future conduct has failed when it came to actually carrying it out. Thus the predetermination and prediction of our future actions is in reality nothing else than the expression of our present resolve concerning our future conduct, and this implies the further resolve not to change our mind. This further resolve will indeed have its moral force at the moment of action, but is in turn subject to change. Now *such* prediction of our future actions is not only compatible with freedom, but is meaningless except in the supposition that we are free and are conscious of it at the time of such prediction.

## **Reproach and Remorse.**

We reproach ourselves for certain actions of the past. In considering this fact we seem to come near the moral argument; still we are not arguing as yet from ethical notions, but we insist here on our *perception* of freedom and are still considering the direct experimental evidence for freedom. It is, then, an undeniable fact, that we feel remorse for certain actions of the past and reproach ourselves for them. But we do not reproach ourselves for an action that was beyond our control. We may and do feel *sorry* for doing something we could not help; but we do not and cannot *reproach* ourselves for it. The very fact of self-reproach supposes another fact, namely, that we perceived our freedom at the time of the action for which we now reproach ourselves. The *sorrow* of an unhappy child, who has accidentally killed his father, and the bitter *self-reproach* of a repenting parricide: these sentiments are as far apart as the poles. Where lies the difference? In the perception of freedom. The parricide knows that his act was free, and this is the worm that dieth not.

## **No Fact More Evident — No Fact More Frequently Expressed.**

There is no fact more evident to us than that of personal freedom. We distinguish most clearly between actions of ours which are beyond our control and those which are subject to our free choice. No one ever dreamt of claiming control over the process of digestion or over the beating of his heart or over all the internal acts of his mind. When the proposition  $2 \times 2 = 4$  is proposed to our intellect, we can by no effort of our will deny our assent; we may use the external symbols, both written and spoken:  $2 \times 2 = 5$ , but we cannot assent to such a proposition. We have, then, the clear perception of internal acts of the mind which are beyond our control. We know that the uprisings of our lower appetite precede our deliberation and often continue in spite of all efforts to banish them; we know that even our rational appetite may be and is at times carried away to indeliberate desires; but we know just as clearly that we need not approve of such desires, that we must not "consent" to them, that we must not make them our own by deliberately yielding to them. Our free will is, as it were, stationed in an impregnable citadel. The uproar of the temptation may be ever so great and threatening; but our foes cannot take possession of the citadel. They may make a breach in the outer walls of our sensitive nature, they may create even the greatest disturbance within the walls; but if they are to enter the sanctuary of free will, we ourselves must open the doors and surrender the keys. No fact is more frequently expressed by us than that of personal freedom, both in ourselves and in others. What else do such phrases of politeness mean, which are so often on our lips: "if you please," "allow me," "consent," "favor me"? We say that we agree, volunteer, grant; and thus there are numerous other expressions implying freedom. Of course, from the mere frequent use of the terms "free" and "freedom" it would be unlawful to argue directly, for the simple reason that these terms have a great variety of meanings, as I took great pains to explain in the first lecture. But indirectly and by inference we may; for we must not forget that in the last analysis all the various meanings of freedom have some reference to personal freedom and lose all force, if personal freedom is denied.

An illustration will make this clear. The word "healthy" is used in

various meanings; we apply it not only to man, but also v. g. to medicine and to the complexion of the face. Man really *is* healthy; medicine *causes* or maintains health, and the complexion of the face *reveals* or manifests health. But eliminate the first meaning of the term, then all the other uses of it lose their significance. Just so the primitive and primary meaning of the term “freedom” is that of personal freedom or free will; all the other meanings of the term either suppose or manifest personal freedom or denote some analogous and imperfect imitation of personal freedom.

There is nothing of which men are more jealous and proud than personal freedom, and nothing is more frequently made the subject of eulogy by orator and poet alike than personal freedom. Men will jeopardize all their earthly possessions, even life and limb, in defense of personal freedom. All glory in the fact, that “man is free, though born in chains,” as Schiller has it.

## **Answers of Materialists to the First Argument.**

Now what do determinists, and in particular materialists, say to this argument? Some of them, untrue to the first principle of the positive and exact sciences, enter into metaphysical speculations concerning the possibility of freedom. They are guilty of that very charge which they so unjustly urge against the Schoolmen. In everything else they bid us to consider the “that” and leave the “how and why and wherefore” alone. But in this case the “that” is a very inconvenient factor to deal with, whilst the “how and why” offers to them seemingly a shelter and hiding place. It most assuredly looks ludicrous to see how men in this age of exact science try to dispute and destroy facts by metaphysical speculations and Hegelian hocus pocus. Suppose we followed the same method when there is question of a simple fact which we perceive with the outer senses! Let me adapt the metaphysical speculations by which the writer on free will in the *Encyclopedia Americana* tries to obscure the direct experimental evidence of freedom, to the question, whether or not such entities as dogs exist.

## **An Adaptation in Parody of a Profound Metaphysical Speculation.**

“The question of the existence of dogs is properly divided into two sections, that of the metaphysical basis and that of the doctrinal application, how namely in practical life we are to conduct ourselves with regard to dogs; but the latter question has so deeply affected the reasonings on the former that it is almost impossible to separate them. The metaphysical problem is unique from its presenting at the very outset enigmas, which have baffled the greatest lights in exact sciences: the enigma of life, the enigma of consciousness and sensation in this peculiar entity which we call dog. The evidence of the senses seems to show us, that such living and sentient entities are running about in the streets of cities mostly and in country places very largely; reason tells us, that life and consciousness in such entities are irreconcilable with the first principles of human thought, the laws of Mechanics, and hence something next to a contradiction in terms. The evidence of the senses seems to show us, that dogs really vegetate, some in fact enormously, that they see, hear and at times bark angrily; reason tells us that such fancied entities, refusing as they do to be treated as mere mechanical devices, must of necessity be an illusion. The problem, then, of the existence of dogs is, strictly speaking, insoluble. The overwhelming weight of reason, however, from the Greek predecessors of Aristotle to the contemporaries of Jonathan Edwards, has won reluctant acceptance for the doctrine that such entities as dogs really do not exist. For, as the laws of Mechanics apply to absolutely everything in Nature, it is evident that if dogs are a reality, they must follow the same laws as other entities, and have no power, nor could even be endowed with such by omnipotence, of performing actions not adequately expressible in terms of matter and motion.”

## **The Tail Wagging the Dog.**

That is what the Greeks called a “*hysteron proteron*” and what we would call the tail wagging the dog. For from the mere *fact* that something really exists, we know that it is possible, and it is preposterous in face of the evident fact to argue to its non-existence from the impossibility of squaring this fact with our preconceived notions concerning the nature of things.

But the assertion that the perception of freedom is an illusion, is too serious to allow it to pass with a joke. We must look a little more closely into the significance of this assertion and realize the disastrous consequences which it entails.

## **Disastrous Consequences.**

The perception of freedom, then, has not been denied; but it is claimed that it is an illusion. Now if our intellect can be deceived in the perception of evident facts of consciousness, if the first source of human knowledge, consciousness, is subject to illusion, then we must despair of all human knowledge. For if our intellect is unable to discern truth from falsehood in spite of objective evidence, what criterion remains? If one of the sources of human knowledge, consciousness, leads to error, what guarantee have we that the same is not the case with the other sources of knowledge? What guarantee is there that our sense-perception is free from error, that our ideas are objectively real, that by reasoning we can arrive at valid conclusions, that historical testimony is worth anything in the acquisition of truth? If one source of knowledge is unreliable and deceiving, why not the others?

But there is still another consideration which makes the denial of facts derived from self-consciousness more destructive of all human knowledge than the denial of truths gathered from any other source of knowledge. Sense-perception, for instance, is no source of knowledge unless I am *conscious* of it; similarly, reasoning is no source of knowledge, unless I am *conscious* of the premises and their force. If, then, consciousness can deceive in spite of objective evidence in the perception of freedom, why not in the perception of other internal present facts, which are the necessary condition for gathering knowledge from other sources? Hence by the denial of freedom, which consciousness so clearly and unmistakably attests, we arrive at the absurdity of absolute scepticism. The value of the experimental argument for freedom, therefore, is *beyond doubt*.

## A Subterfuge.

Other adversaries of free will, realizing the disastrous results which are entailed in the charge of “illusion,” admit the value of the testimony of consciousness, but raise the question, whether men rightly interpret the *contents* of this testimony. We grant that when we are inattentive, we may mistake an indeliberate desire for consent; especially persons inclined to scruples and devoid of clear concepts concerning moral conduct, are liable to such mistakes ; but they really never have “evidence” ; being notorious “confusionarii,” they mistake the mere semblance for “evidence.” To say, however, that every man in every instance commits this blunder of false interpretation, is a mere subterfuge, which we have forestalled by the very manner in which we have proposed the argument.

We have seen that in the examples adduced by us, consciousness attests in every detail what we have claimed after formulating our question most precisely. In our examples we insisted on the presence of the conditions for freedom; we then analyzed our mental attitude towards the motives apprehended, and saw that what consciousness attests is an internal act of the will by which we actively determine which of the conflicting motives is to prevail: and that is *Free Choice*. We insisted further that we distinguish most clearly between deliberate and indeliberate acts. In face of such clear testimony it is positively absurd to question whether or not we interpret rightly the contents of such testimony.

## **Mistaking Logical Possibility for Power of Free Choice.**

Professor Alexander (quoted by Fr. Maher, S. J., *Psychology*, p. 413) explains to us in detail how we come to make such a false interpretation. "Which motive is chosen," he says, "is perfectly fixed and dependent upon the character, which cannot choose otherwise than it does." But whilst we are thus inexorably determined to one line of action we realize the *logical possibility* of another line of action, and mistaking this mere logical possibility for the *power of free choice* we come to think that we were "free to do otherwise." Here are his own words: "Given any act, a different act is *conceivable*, there is a *logical* alternative to everything. But so far as the agent believes that he, with his character and under his circumstances, could have acted otherwise, *he confuses the feeling that he chooses with this mere logical possibility*" (*l. c.*).

Now we most assuredly do nothing of the kind. Such *logical possibility* of being determined to another line of action is found in every faculty of ours, not only in the cognitive faculties, the outer and inner senses as well as the intellect, but also in the appetitive faculties, the sensitive and rational appetency. But we never confound this logical possibility with freedom; on the contrary we know full well, that in spite of such logical possibility our act of vision, hearing, etc., is under given definite circumstances beyond our control, that the acts of the lower appetency are not free. Even when our will is carried away to "impulsive volitions," as surely happens at times, we realize such logical possibility, but we most clearly know, that we exercised no power of choice. When, on the other hand, we choose freely among various lines of action, we realize something altogether distinct from "the mere logical alternative to everything else," we perceive unmistakably the *perfect dominion we possess over the acts of our will under such circumstances*: and this perfect dominion is what we have called "active indifference" or power of free choice.

## The Sensation of a Man Pulled in Two Directions.

Still more unsuccessful is Professor Alexander, when he offers the following explanation of our consciousness of freedom. He says: "Pull a body to the right with a force of twelve pounds, and to the left with a force of eight; it moves to the right. Imagine that body a mind aware of the forces which act upon it; it will move in the direction of that which, for whatever reason, appeals to it most; and in doing so it will, *just because it is conscious*, act of itself, and will have the consciousness of freedom." (Quoted by Fr. Maher, S. J., l. c., p. 407.)

It is very hard to see whether the forces "appealing" to this "body-mind" are meant to be *material* forces whose "pull" can be measured in pounds, or *moral* forces, *i. e.*, conflicting motives intellectually apprehended. The two are just as dexterously mixed up in the illustration as are body and mind. In the case of *moral* forces it is most assuredly wrong that our will always "moves in the direction of that which, for whatever reason, appeals to it most," as we have seen, when analyzing our experiences in this regard. But we shall return to this when examining a similar sweeping assertion of Jonathan Edwards, viz., "Man always follows the greater seeming good." Still further removed from truth is the statement, that "*just because we are conscious*" of the forces appealing to us, "we have the consciousness of freedom"; for we are conscious of, and distinguish most clearly between deliberate and indeliberate acts.

If, however, *material* forces are meant, I would suggest that somebody volunteer to have the experiment tried on himself, and that he give us an accurate account of the sensation which he has when pulled in two directions. The principal point to be attended to is, that the subject of the experiment be *conscious of the forces acting upon him*; for it is claimed that "*just because he is conscious*" of them, he will come to think that he moves freely when pulled. So let him take an accurate look at his stout friend who is going to do the pulling to the right, and at his lean friend who is going to do the pulling to the left. Now I cannot speak from personal experience in the matter, but I venture to predict that, when the pulling begins, the subject of the experiment will have the very uncomfortable sensation of being pulled, and that by no degree of

conscious attention to the forces pulling him will he conjure up the feeling of moving freely.

*O tempora, O mores!* To what lengths of absurdity men will go, in order to explain away an inconvenient fact!

## **The Evidence of Consciousness Too Crude.**

The attitude which the late Professor James of Harvard takes on the question of free will in his *Principles of Psychology* (Vol. II, p. 569579) may be briefly synopsized as follows. We may view the question experimentally, scientifically, and morally. Viewed experimentally, the question is insoluble, as “we are thrown back . . . upon the *crude evidences of introspection* . . . with all its liabilities to deception” (*l. c.*, p. 572). Viewed scientifically, the evidence is in favor of determinism; for free will is irreconcilable with “the great scientific postulate, that the world must be one unbroken fact, and that prediction of all things without exception must be ideally, even if not actually, possible” (*l. c.*, p. 573). In other words, Professor James emphasizes the same difficulty which led Du Bois-Reymond to characterize free will as the greatest of the seven world-riddles. Viewed morally, however, the evidence is in favor of freedom; for “it is a moral postulate . . . that what *ought* to be can be, and that bad acts cannot be fated, but that good ones must be possible in their place” (*l. c.*, p. 573).

What are we to do? “When scientific and moral postulates war thus with each other and objective proof is not to be had, the only course is *voluntary choice*, for scepticism itself, if systematic, is *also voluntary choice*. . . *Freedom's first deed should he to affirm itself*” (*l.c.*, p. 573)

Professor James must be commended, first of all, for the fact that he upholds the doctrine of free will, although on ethical grounds only. For the rest there are a great many things to be said with regard to the views expressed. At present, however, we are concerned only with the charge that experimental or “objective proof is not to be had,” as the evidence of introspection is *too crude*.

## **Going Back to a Chapter of Critical Logic.**

Why is the evidence of introspection too crude? It is absolutely the only means we have to acquire the knowledge of present internal facts. Of course, if *too much* is expected from this evidence, it is most assuredly *too crude*; and that is true not only of the evidence of introspection, but also of the evidence of the senses. In Criteriology or Critical Logic it is pointed out that all we can expect from these two sources (internal and external experience) is no more and no less than the knowledge of *present facts*, internal or external respectively. We must not expect knowledge as to the intrinsic nature of these facts, of the “why and how” of these facts; if we do, then *all experimental evidence is too crude*.

## **Consistently All Experimental Evidence Too Crude.**

I find myself touching accidentally the flame of a candle with my finger, and before I have time to reflect, I withdraw my finger. Or I see the leg of a frog stimulated by an electrical current, and observe a similar phenomenon. Am I not capable of testifying to the *bare facts*, just as I have expressed them, on the evidence of internal and external experience? The very possibility of experimental sciences, and in particular of Physiology, should have to be denied, if such evidence were to be rejected as being too crude. There is in fact nothing crude about this evidence, if no more than the knowledge of the *bare facts* is expected from it.

Of course these phenomena are instances of “reflex movements,” an external stimulus being transmitted from the periphery by afferent nerves to a nerve-center in the spinal column, and thence reflected by the path of efferent nerves to the muscle, which in consequence contracts. If *this* knowledge is expected from the evidence of the senses in the simple observation, mentioned above, then it is most assuredly too crude; for it does not furnish us this knowledge. To arrive at this, we must make a more detailed experimental research with the help of the dissecting knife and the microscope. But we must bear in mind that in the end it is not the dissecting knife and the microscope that furnish us the data for a clearer insight into the reflex mechanism; it is again the *evidence of the senses* which testifies to what the microscope reveals. If the evidence of the senses in the first simple observation was too crude, it is not less crude in the latter observations. If further research is to be possible at all, we must beware of calling any experimental evidence too crude.

Now just as clearly as I perceive that in withdrawing my finger I acted without any deliberation, in fact without any volition of any kind, just so clearly, I say, I perceive that certain acts of my will depend on my free deliberation. Of course the evidence of introspection must not be expected to furnish what is the fruit of much further speculation, namely, a clear insight into the nature of free choice. This being understood, we most emphatically deny that there is anything crude about the evidence of introspection. Or, if you insist on calling it crude, it is not thereby of less value. The rock which forms the foundation of an edifice is also

crude, but not therefore to be rejected. The simple evidence of introspection which furnishes us the bare fact of freedom, is one of those rocks on which the sciences of Psychology and Ethics rest, and cannot be rejected because of its crudeness without bringing these edifices to ruin. You might just as well say that the evidence of introspection is too crude to establish the fact that we are thinking and willing at all.

Professor James realizes as much, for in this very chapter on Free Will (p. 570) he refers us back to a very subtle discussion in the first volume of his *Psychology*, which culminates in the question, whether or not we think at all, or, more pointedly and scientifically, whether or not thought processes are going on; to be quite precise : whether or not we must eliminate both the "Thought" and the "Ego," which in the form of the personal pronoun "I" we are liable to put in front of the verb "think," or in a nutshell : whether or not it thinks at all.

The more I become acquainted with modern Philosophy, the more I begin to doubt, whether or not "it thinks at all"; at any rate it does not seem to think very much. You will find it pardonable, if such discussions arouse the humorous sensibilities of one who, like myself, is accustomed to the much despised "Metaphysics of the Schoolmen"; and if I may be allowed to read between the lines, Professor James himself, I think, must have chuckled and smiled when he penned them. I quote only the conclusion reached in the chapter referred to (Vol. I, p. 304) : "Speculations like this traverse common sense; and not only do they traverse common sense (which in philosophy is no insuperable objection) but they contradict the fundamental assumption of *every* philosophic school. Spiritualists, transcendentalists, and empiricists alike admit in us a continual direct perception of the thinking activity in the concrete. However they may otherwise disagree, they vie with each other in the cordiality of their recognition of our *thoughts* as the one sort of existent which skepticism cannot touch." He adds in a note: "The only exception I know of is M. J. Souriau, in his important article in the *Revue Philosophique*, Vol. 12, p. 449. M. Souriau's conclusion is '*que la conscience n'existe pas*' " Then he continues in the text: "I will therefore treat the last few pages as a parenthetical digression, and from now to the end of the volume revert to the path of common- sense again. I mean by this that I will continue to assume (as I have assumed all along, especially in the last chapter) a direct awareness of the process of our thinking as

such, simply insisting on the fact that it is an even more inward and subtle phenomenon than most of us suppose. At the conclusion of the volume, however, I may permit myself to revert again to doubts here provisionally mooted, and will indulge in some metaphysical reflections suggested by them."

You may ask in sheer bewilderment: Where are we? What has this to do with the question of free will? Professor James, in discussing the crude evidences of introspection for freedom has indeed been leading us into what the Germans have aptly styled the "*Ash-Grey*" It is high time for us to call a halt, if indeed we claim a right to philosophize at all concerning anything whatever. That we exist and think, is a primitive truth which requires no demonstration and admits of none on account of its overwhelming immediate evidence. Our doctrine of free will must indeed be a stronghold if it cannot be denied or even questioned without shaking the very foundations of all human knowledge, without jeopardizing the primitive truth of our own existence as thinking beings.

## A More Fundamental Difference of Opinion.

One more word, and we are done with the discussion of Professor James' charge, that the evidence of introspection is too crude. To Professor James the question of free will is ultimately a question of the reflex mechanism, "a system of arcs and paths." We read on p. 575 (Vol. II): "Where there is effort just as where there is none, the ideas themselves which furnish the matter of deliberation are brought before the mind by the machinery of association. *And this machinery is essentially a system of arcs and paths, a reflex system, whether effort he amongst its incidents or not.*"

If we do not restrict our question of freedom to the internal acts of the will, as we have done, but consider also the control our will exerts over the bodily organs, we can indeed not ignore the "system of arcs and paths," *i. e.*, the reflex mechanism. But the acts of the will themselves, as also those of the intellect, are not a part of this "system of arcs and paths," for they are of an altogether immaterial nature. But here we touch a more fundamental difference of opinion, which we cannot discuss now; we must reserve that for another lecture, in which the relation between brain and mind will engage our attention. For the present it may suffice to say that Professor James can advance no argument in favor of such a supposition, except from preconceived notions of Materialism, which are contradicted by facts, and in particular by the fact of freedom which consciousness so unmistakably attests.

The proof of free will, then, from the evidence of introspection, stands in spite of all the efforts made to nullify it or to belittle its value. We have laid so much stress on the *experimental evidence*, because in our era of positive sciences there is nothing that appeals to men more than experimental evidence, and because it is this very consideration of the *stubborn fact of free will* that has made materialists characterize it as the greatest of the world-riddles. As I have said: So much the worse for the supposition which makes it a riddle.

## **Lecture 3: Free Will, the Indispensable Basis of Morality and the Necessary Complement of Man's Rational Nature**

IN this lecture we shall consider the second and third proof for freedom, namely, the moral and the teleological proof. The discussion of these arguments will reveal the fact that the doctrine of free will branches into the other departments of philosophy, especially Ethics, and most intimately affects our social life. Law, obligation, right and wrong, justice and many other kindred notions acquire a different meaning according as the doctrine of free will is accepted or rejected. The phase of the problem, then, which is before us must appeal to every serious student and every thinking mind.

## **The Moral Proof.**

The dignity of man over all the rest of visible creation consists in his moral nature. Any supposition, therefore, which cuts the root of man's moral nature, is absurd. But the denial of freedom cuts the root of man's moral nature. Therefore the denial of freedom is absurd.

If man is not free, what difference is there between what we call morally good and bad acts? If man is determined beyond control in all his actions, what is there to warrant such a distinction? He is necessitated to the former as he is to the latter. The greatest hero, then, in the moral world is no better than the greatest criminal; both are inexorably determined to their actions. I say the former is no better than the latter, and the latter no worse than the former, understanding these terms in the sense of *morally* better and *morally* worse. For there is indeed a difference, but only the difference which exists between a cripple and a well-built specimen of humanity. A cripple calls for commiseration, not blame. Just so there can be only pity, not blame for the criminal. The perfectly shaped man may command admiration, but he does not deserve praise. Just so there can be no praise for the virtuous man, but at best admiration. He is indeed adorned with what we are accustomed to call virtues; but he cannot help it. Only freedom differentiates a criminal and a saint in the moral order.

## Moral Positivism.

This connection between free will and the moral nature of man is so evident that some determinists not only admit it reluctantly, but make it a point to deny and disprove the intrinsic difference between what we call morally good and bad. Thus, for instance, Hobbes. In Psychology he is an adversary of free will; in Ethics, an exponent of what is known as "Moral Positivism." A high sounding term: moral positivism, an outgrowth only of the more far-reaching empiricism, is the name of the doctrine, that to the satisfaction of those who hold it, has done away once for all with all true morality, obligation, right, and wrong. Moral positivists indeed keep these names, but they destroy the reality denoted by them. According to Hobbes, then, there is really no *intrinsic* difference between morally good and bad deeds, but the distinction is due to positive human legislation. Others trace it to custom, education, or to some other positive fact; but all are agreed that there is no intrinsic difference. With some indeed moral positivism has developed into a sort of moral "*Nihilism*" Thus, for instance, Haeckel does not hesitate to assert: "The moral order exists no more in nature than in the lives of men, no more in natural history than in the history of culture. The cruel and unceasing struggle for existence is the true spring of the blind history of the world." (Quoted by Fr. Cathrein, *Moralphilosophie*, Vol. I, p. 141.) This is what we should naturally expect from the out-and-out Materialist and Evolutionist. Nietzsche likewise uses the most shameless and truly cynical language. Somehow or other Nietzsche has come to be looked up to as a sort of demigod and his every utterance is considered an oracle. The fact is, that for the last eleven years of his earthly existence he was not in a normally conscious state, and to judge from his speculations it is doubtful, whether he ever was. His doctrine on the point at issue is best characterized by a word of his own coinage. He considers himself an "over-man," to whom "the whole of moral science is a courageous and continued falsehood." (Quoted by Fr. Cathrein, l. c., p. 143.)

In order, therefore, to show the strength of the moral argument for free will, I must insist more on the reality of moral notions than on the necessary connection of these notions with free will. I must enter, then, on a purely ethical question, all the more, since the ideas of Haeckel,

Nietzsche and others like them, have found their way into our popular magazines, even into the literature of fiction, and have thus become a deadly poison for the reading public.

## **A Purely Ethical Question.**

The question is briefly this: Are there any actions which are morally good or bad prior to any human or divine law, so that some actions

are bad not only because they are forbidden, but forbidden because they are bad? We readily admit that there are numerous actions which, indifferent in themselves, are bad only because they are forbidden; but besides these, we claim, there are others, which are forbidden because they are bad. The law forbidding them does not make them bad, but they are bad prior to any law and to any other positive fact, as for instance custom, education, and the like. We claim the same for some morally good actions, namely, that they are good prior to any law or any other positive fact.

Let it suffice here to adduce one argument. If it is only the forbidding law that makes actions morally bad and the prescribing law that makes actions morally good, it follows that there cannot be a bad law. For a law can only be bad, if it prescribe what is bad. But this is impossible, as from the very supposition of Moral Positivists no action is bad prior to any law. It is the law, and the law only that makes actions good or bad; good if it prescribe them, bad if it forbid them. How then can there be a bad law? It follows, furthermore, that if a law prescribe, for instance, parricide or perjury, that action is good.

You may say that this conclusion is not intended by Moral Positivists. Possibly or probably not; but it certainly follows from their principle, namely, that it is the prescription of the law that makes actions good. If you say that no law could possibly make parricide or perjury morally good, you surrender this fundamental principle of Positivism, you admit that there are actions which of their own intrinsic nature and prior to any positive law are morally good or bad.

The same reasoning may be applied to custom or education as the source of the distinction between morally good and bad. There cannot possibly be a bad custom or a bad system of education; for according to this form of moral Positivism it is custom or education that makes all actions good or bad.

Now let us sum up the moral argument for freedom. Making use of the foregoing discussion, we may give it the following syllogistic form: There is an intrinsic difference between morally good and bad actions. But this difference is null and void, unless man is free (as we have shown before). Therefore man is free.

## **Another Attack on the Argument.**

Before proceeding further we must at least mention another attack made on this argument. Whilst Moral Positivists deny our major proposition, there are others who deny the minor, which is otherwise generally conceded as self-evident, namely, that there is a necessary connection between free will and morality. The futility of such an attempt, however, we shall not consider now; we shall do so after we have proposed another form of the moral argument, that from obligation.

## **Argument from Obligation.**

In its merest outlines this argument is as follows: Obligation is not a mere conventionality, not a mere name, but a reality; man is really and truly obliged in conscience to perform certain actions, and to avoid others. But this obligation supposes that man is free. Therefore man is free.

No one will thank me if I state or attempt to prove the contradictory of my major proposition. Suppose I were to say, that debtors must not pay their bills, that those with whom you have entered on a bilateral contract must not perform their part of the agreement. If I were seriously to attempt to prove such a statement, destructive as it is of social relations among men, by saying that obligation in conscience is an old-fashioned medieval notion, I think there is no one, however little he may care for medieval notions, who would agree either with my argument or my statement. I take it then that man has real obligations: of justice, as in the cases cited; of charity, as for instance towards father and mother; of gratitude to all benefactors. I am sure I need not enter on a detailed proof of this assertion.

But — and this was my minor proposition — obligation supposes that man is free. Here is the force of our argument. If man is not free, he is necessitated in his actions, they are beyond his control. Now if this be so, of what use is it to preach to him of obligation and responsibility? You might just as well preach to a doll. You cannot say that a criminal *ought* to avoid crime, unless he *can* avoid it.— Now what do determinists say to this second form of the moral argument?

## **Jonathan Edwards Again.**

I shall let the writer on free will in the *Encyclopedia Americana* give the answer. An *Encyclopedia* is a source of information for many; and, if it contains errors, it is good to point them out. Hence it is that I give so much consideration to this article in the *Americana*. The writer of this article is, as stated before, an adversary of free will. By way of objection he proposes substantially our argument, namely that, if man is not free, he is an automaton, and if an automaton, incapable of obligation — This is his answer: “ In this extreme form the fallacy is easily apparent. The will, as Jonathan Edwards has put it, always follows the greatest seeming good.” (Allow me to state in parenthesis, that Buridan had attempted this form of attack long, long before him; but has he or Jonathan Edwards ever proved such a statement?) “ But its estimate of good is not an unvarying thing, but constantly changing with experience and reason. Now moral rules . . . form a part of this good, and therefore become new causes which determine the will: and whatever may have been the causation which has determined the evolving and enforcing of the moral law, it is nevertheless a portion of the environment which acts on the mind.”

## **"The Will Always Follows the Greater Seeming Good."**

Now when Jonathan Edwards says that the will *always* follows the *greater seeming good*, this statement, if taken in its generality ("always"), is either false or tautological; but if it be reduced to the limits of truth which it really contains (substituting "frequently" for "always"), it proves nothing against free will. Let us substantiate these two assertions.

The *greater seeming good* stands either (1) for the more pleasurable, or (2) for the more rational (moral) good. Or if it is to denote either of the two, it may be (3) what is more in accord with our habitual inclination, or (4) what is more in keeping with our present actual inclination. But the present actual inclination may be either deliberate or indeliberate; and thus the fourth meaning of the term breaks up into two more meanings, namely (5) the good more in accord with our present actual indeliberate inclination, and lastly (6) that in accord with our actual deliberate inclination or choice.

Now in all meanings of the term except the last, the statement of Jonathan Edwards is false, because it is contradicted by experience. For it is an incontestable fact of experience, that men do not always follow the more *pleasurable*, as it is only fair to state that not all men are Epicureans. Nor do men always follow the more *rational* good, for then there would be no sin and vice. Again it is wrong to say, that men always follow their greater *habitual inclination*, whether in the direction of virtue or of vice; for many a sinner has reformed his evil ways and broken the strong ties of an inveterate habit, just as more than one moral hero has been known to fall and act against his acquired habits of virtue. Considering the fourth meaning of "the greater seeming good" we must beware of an equivocation, as I have pointed out before. If the term denotes "what is more in accord with our actual *indeliberate* inclination," it is wrong to say that men always follow this good. For there have never been wanting those who under the greatest stress of temptation have adhered to the path of virtue, just as it is a sad fact that there have been and are men who resist the most potent influences of religion and virtue and harden their hearts against the strongest inspirations of divine grace. It is precisely this fact, on which we put so much stress when analyzing the experimental evidence for freedom, namely, that as a matter of fact,

men do not always follow the line of least resistance, that their actions are not always the mere resultant of character plus present motives.

In all meanings, therefore, excepting the sixth and last, of “the greater seeming good,” the *general* statement of Jonathan Edwards, that men *always* follow the greater seeming good, is *false, because it is negatived by experience*.

If we take it, however, in the sixth and last meaning, namely, that men always act in accord with their actual *deliberate* inclination, then the statement is absolutely and universally true; but it is a mere *tautology*, meaning that men always deliberately incline towards that towards which they deliberately incline, or to use another phrase: *that motive prevails which prevails*. So much for the first part of my answer.

Now let us reduce the proposition of Jonathan Edwards to the limits of the truth which it undoubtedly contains. It is true that we *often* (not always) follow the “greater seeming good” in the sense that we follow the “line of least resistance,” whichever of the various alternatives that be. But — and this is a point of prime importance — while following the greater attraction, we realize most clearly that we do so, at least *frequently*, as a result of our *own free choice*, fully aware that we *can* change our resolution (and often *do* so) without any change in the perception of the “greater seeming good.”

## **Which is the “Greater Seeming Good”?**

To take a practical example. A physician, just ready to go to the theatre, receives a summons to a person dangerously sick. Here you have pleasure and duty trying in turn to gain the approval of the will. Which is the “greater seeming good”? Or again a young physician, only too anxious to gain a clientage, is asked to perform a surgical operation which is ethically of a rather doubtful or positively bad character. Which is the “greater seeming good”? Is it determined by the antecedents of the choice, character plus present motives, or does the choice determine the “greater seeming good”?

We answer, on the infallible testimony of internal experience in such like circumstances, that our choice is not inexorably determined by its antecedents, that our choice does not necessarily follow the line of least resistance. Frequently, in fact, our choice lies along the line of *greatest* resistance. The physician chooses, and *what he chooses is “the greatest seeming good”* no matter whether this is the line of *least or greatest resistance*.

The *external action* is indeed preceded and determined by the practical judgment (*judicium ultimo-practicum*) : “This is the greater seeming good,” but the *internal act of choice* is not preceded and inexorably determined by such a judgment; on the contrary, this judgment is determined by the act of choice, so that “the greater seeming good” really means “this is *my choice*”

## Buridan's Ass.

If we were really restricted to the “greater seeming good” in the sense of “the line of least resistance,” then in numerous instances we should be doomed to inactivity much like *Buridan's ass*, who (sad to relate) died between two bundles of hay, one as good and as near as the other. Our discussion of free will would of course be incomplete, unless we introduced somehow this familiar figure, even though some violence be needed. (By way of parenthesis, however, it is well to remark, that it is not *precisely asinine*, but human liberty, we are discussing; hence the sad story of Buridan's ass need not detain us longer.)

Suppose you have taken a brisk walk into the country. The exertion was perhaps greater than you had anticipated. You decide to return, and you are looking for the shortest and easiest way home, you are positively looking for the “*greater seeming good*” in the sense of “the line of least resistance.” But there is no one to tell you, and you are unable to make out for yourself; you cannot settle that troublesome question: “*Which* is the greater seeming good?” Now if it be really true that “man always follows the greater seeming good,” that he is restricted to do what he understands to be the “line of least resistance,” then you are in this particular instance welded to the spot. Are you? *Solvitur ambulando*. You would be a fool, were you to wait for the necessary information as to the “greater seeming good” in the sense of Jonathan Edwards.

Take another case. A friend has sent you as a Christmas present half a dozen boxes of fine cigars, each containing a different brand, one better than the other. You are — let us suppose — a smoker, and on this festive occasion looking for the best smoke possible under the circumstances. But there is no one to tell you which brand is the best; besides “*de gustibus non est disputandum*”; and you yourself really do not know which box contains the best cigars. You are again confronted by the bothersome question: “*Which* is the greater seeming good?” Now do you mean to say that you are doomed to wait until you have satisfied your mind as to the “greater seeming good” in the sense of Jonathan Edwards, before you can enjoy your smoke? The phraseological doctrine of Jonathan Edwards may be in its proper place in a class-room of Physiological Psychology, but it does not fit into practical life. It would be

easy to multiply such examples. And what do they teach? That the moral argument for freedom is left untouched by the objection of Jonathan Edwards.

## **“Men are the Result of their Environment.”**

But, you may say, is it not true that men are, as a matter of fact, the result of their environment? A proverb has it — and proverbs are always the crystallisation of common experience and consent: “Tell me with whom you associate, and I will tell you who you are.” What else does this mean but that men are indeed the result of their environment, that they are really not free? With the virtuous you will be virtuous and with the wicked you will be wicked. Are not in very truth many of our criminals but “victims of circumstances”?

There is no doubt a good deal of truth in this, but we must not *exaggerate this truth*. “Men are the result of their environment.” The flaw in this proposition is first of all its *sweeping universality*. It would not be difficult to cite a great number of instances to the contrary. There is many a lily among the thorns and many a black sheep in a good flock; these are decidedly not the result of environment. Sacred as well as profane history is full of such examples, and our own experience furnishes many more; but they are lost sight of in such sweeping assertions.

“Men are the result of their environment.” What does this mean and what else can it mean in the face of the facts to the contrary and in face of the unmistakable testimony of our own consciousness which avers that we are free, but this that our environment exerts *a great influence* on us both for good and for evil? And this is true; but it does not militate against the freedom of the will. In stating the problem, we took great pains to point out that it is one thing to be *influenced* by motives, and another thing to be *inexorably determined* by them. The first we readily admitted and even emphasized against such absurd misrepresentations of deliberate choice as “willing without motive”; the latter we found to be an undeniable fact, attested by our own consciousness and the unanimous consent of mankind.

“Men are the result of their environment.” A number of our actions are no doubt the result of our environment, in the sense of determinism, and such actions are not free. Because the will is free, it does not follow that its every act is free. In fact, the *limitations of freedom* are many, especially when there is question of the purely external actions, in which the “reflex mechanism” and the question of “instinct” in man cannot be

ignored. But it is not our purpose at present to pursue such limitations in detail, especially as the intricate problem of “brain and mind” also enters largely into the discussion. Even if only *at times* we really and truly exercised freedom, our thesis would stand. Of course there is a wide field here for exaggeration in both directions, and it is not within the scope of this lecture to point out the golden mean of the truth. For the purposes of our present discussion it suffices, that the sweeping assertion: “Men are the result of their environment” is false in the deterministic sense, because contradicted by facts; and that the grain of truth contained in this generalization — be it ever so great — does not militate against freedom, but only makes for a right understanding of our doctrine of free will.

## Moral Statistics.

The argument against free will drawn from Moral Statistics is considered by many determinists to be one of their most powerful weapons, but in its last analysis it comes to that which we have been just now considering. Thus, for instance, Buckle, who according to Fr. Maher (l. c., p. 421) "used to be the classical author on this line of attack," claims, that the actions of men "vary in obedience to the changes in the surrounding society" (quoted l. c.), which is only another expression for the sweeping assertion: "Men are the result of their environment." "Suicide," according to Buckle, "is merely the product of the general conditions of society, and the individual felon only carries into effect what is a necessary consequence of preceding circumstances" (l. c.).

The subject of Moral Statistics is so vast that we cannot possibly be expected to treat it here exhaustively. Nor is this necessary, as will be evident from the following reflections, which go to show how unjustly Moral Statistics are adduced as an argument against free will.

First of all, Moral Statistics, as Statistics in general, record only *external actions*, and for the most part only such of these as for some reason or other become prominent and attract public attention. Now such external actions may in the case of one individual be preceded by a long series of internal struggles against the temptation, while in the case of another they are the result of a rather quick, though free, determination, and in the case of a third the inevitable outcome of a sudden impulse or mental derangement. Adding such external actions indiscriminately — and Moral Statistics cannot do otherwise — is really like *adding apples, peaches, and railroad cars*. In discussing free will we are, as we have repeatedly insisted, mainly concerned with the *internal acts of the will*, and these must of their very nature remain unrecorded in Moral Statistics; their records are found in the testimony of our own consciousness and the consent of mankind, which distinguishes clearly between deliberate and indeliberate acts.

Secondly, it must be borne in mind that it is very difficult to compile statistics of any kind, as is well known and best appreciated by those who have been engaged in work of that kind. In particular, Moral Statistics, as a science, is barely out of its infancy. But it is hardly "scientific" to draw

an inference from so imperfect a science against a *fact* attested by our consciousness and the universal consent of mankind.

Thirdly, the *regularity*, which is supposed to exist between certain social conditions and certain crimes or other actions of men, is very *imperfect*. If these actions were really the inevitable result of antecedent conditions in the deterministic sense, their regularity should be that of the phenomena of Physics and Chemistry, and we should, at least ideally, be able to determine by a mathematical formula which action is sure to result from given circumstances. Now Moral Statistics as a matter of fact *do not*, and for the reasons pointed out above, *cannot* show such regularity. As Mansel (quoted by Fr. Maher, l. c., p. 422) points out: "It is precisely because individual actions are not reducible to any fixed law, or capable of representation by any numerical calculation, that statistical averages acquire their value as substitutes." Determinism, if true, involves at least ideally *mathematical regularity* between social conditions as motives and actions of men as their inevitable results; but of this there is so far not even the faintest shadow.

Fourthly, *that regularity* which Moral Statistics really exhibit, is quite compatible with freedom. An action for which a man has no motive will not be performed; and if a whole class of people should, on account of their social conditions, have no motive to perform such an action, that action will not be performed by any one of them. Vice versa, if social conditions are such as to offer inducements to a whole class of people for the performance of a certain action, many will most probably perform that action. This accounts for many regularities in the actions of men, without in the least infringing on their liberty.

Thus for instance there is nothing surprising in the fact that poor people are rarely found guilty of stealing on a large scale, of ruining thousands by a stroke of their pen, just as we do not wonder at the fact that the rich are rarely found guilty of petty theft. On account of their social conditions neither of the two classes have as a rule motives for said actions: hence these regularities. — Again that the wage-earner is rarely, if ever engaged in gigantic speculations in the stock-market, most assuredly constitutes a regularity, just as does the fact that few of the wealthier class are found handling the spade and carrying their dinner-pails. No one could reasonably conclude anything against freedom from such regularities. Their logical value amounts to no more than if you were

to argue from the regularity of our wearing heavier clothes in winter than in summer.

Admitting further the fact, as we have done emphatically, that motives *influence* our will, although they do not inexorably determine it — there is indeed a great probability that when social conditions offer to a whole class of people an inducement for a certain line of action, many of that class will yield to its influence. And although this yielding was free, a certain regularity will be the result.

Moral Statistics, then, in their last analysis show nothing that can reasonably be considered a valid proof against free will. At best they emphasize the limitations of free will. A more thorough treatment of the subject of Moral Statistics may be found in the *Stimmen aus Maria Laach*, 1882, I, p. 345 sq., and in the excellent work of Dr. C. Gutberlet, *Die Willens-freiheit und ihre Gegner*, 2 ed., p. 41-120.

## Capping the Climax. “Free Will Makes Moral Law Impossible.”

We said above that there are some determinists — who deny what is otherwise generally conceded as self-evident, namely, that free will is the necessary basis of morality. Hence they claim that our moral argument is based on the false assumption that the denial of freedom cuts the root of morality. The writer on free will in the *Encyclopedia Americana* belongs to this class of adversaries. In fact, he *caps the climax* when he retorts the argument saying: “So far from determinism making moral law impossible, *free will makes it impossible*. If volition can *perpetually nullify the action of motive*, there is a fatal breach in the continuity of cause and effect; there can be no calculable sequence of action and therefore no law.”

From this and other previous quotations it is evident, that the writer of this article has not directed his attack against the real doctrine of free will, but has caricatured this doctrine in the phrases “nullifying the action of motive,” “willing without motive,” “causeless acts.”

After all that has been said on this subject no further remarks are necessary, and we can dismiss such suppositions as, what they really are, *a mere caricature*. Further, the notions of *morality* which the writer has, are something altogether different from those held by ordinary mortals. They seem to coincide with the views expressed in the article on “Ethics” in the same Encyclopedia. We read there: “Indeed, it is now clear that the further development of the science of ethics waits upon the more thorough clearing up of the *evolutionary ideas*. ....

Through the conception of evolution it is probable that ethics *will be emancipated from the survival of the idea that it is an art whose business it is to lay down rules* . . . . The coincidence of the evolutionary tendency with the growth of democracy will *relieve ethics in its philosophic aspects from its dependence upon fixed values, ideals, standards and laws*, and constitute ethics more and more a working method for the self-regulation of the individual and of society.”

Of course, if such are the notions of morality and if free will is really a power “perpetually nullifying the action of motive,” then most assuredly “so far from determinism making moral law impossible, free will makes it

impossible.” That is what we call *capping the climax – of absurdity*.

## Determinism: A Perfect Mechanical Fit, a Bad Moral Fit.

We must bring our discussion of the moral aspect of free will to a close, though a great many things have remained unsaid. Professor James, as stated before, defends the doctrine of free will on ethical grounds in spite of his metaphysical speculations concerning the evidence of introspection, and in spite of his “scientific” convictions which favor determinism as “a perfect *mechanical* fit for the rest of the universe.” But he realizes that determinism is “a bad *moral* fit.” The moral aspect of free will must indeed be a very strong one, if it can triumph over such difficulties. We can, therefore, do no better than conclude with a passage from James, especially as it brings out a phase of the moral argument which we had no time to explain. I shall quote it without comment; for the quotation itself I am again indebted to Fr. Maher (l. c., p. 401).

“Some *regrets* are pretty obstinate and hard to stifle,—*regrets* for acts of wanton cruelty or treachery, for example, whether performed by others or by ourselves. Hardly anyone can remain *entirely* optimistic after reading the confession of the murderer at Brockton the other day; how to get rid of the wife whose continued existence bored him, he inveigled her into a desert spot, shot her four times, and then as she lay on the ground and said to him, ‘You didn’t do it on purpose, did you, dear?’ replied, ‘No, I didn’t do it on purpose,’ as he raised a rock and smashed her skull. Such an occurrence with the mild sentence and self-satisfaction of the prisoner, is a field for a crop of *regrets*, which one need not take up in detail. We feel that though a perfect *mechanical* fit for the rest of the universe, it is a bad *moral* fit, and that something else would have been really better in its place. *But for the deterministic philosophy the murder, the sentence, and the prisoner’s optimism were all necessary from eternity; and nothing else for a moment had a ghost of a chance of being put into their place.* To admit such a choice, the determinists tell us, would be to make a suicide of reason; so we must steel our hearts against the thought. . . . (Yet) Determinism in denying that anything else can be instead of the murder, *virtually defines the universe as a place in which what ought to be is IMPOSSIBLE*” (l. c.).

## The Teleological Proof of Free Will.

Now let us proceed to the third and last proof of free will, which we have styled the “teleological argument.” It is a specimen of a Scholastic *a-priori* proof. You need not be afraid that I will envelop you in a cloud of metaphysical dust. Ever since the Hegelian school of Philosophy brought the very name of “Metaphysics” into disrepute, men who have the normal use of their faculties have become horrified at the term “*a-priori*.” Fr. Hammerstein, S. J., in his book, *Foundations of Faith* (Part I, p. 12), has admirably characterized this Hegelian caricature of a real “*a-priori* proof,” and I cannot refrain from quoting it, in order to emphasize, what you must *not* expect. Fr. Hammerstein does this by telling a little story, which, however, he does not offer as serious history. He hits the Germans hard, but of course those meant are only the *German Hegelians*, an everlasting disgrace to the German nation.

## **Fr. Hammerstein's Story.**

"A Frenchman, an Englishman, and a German were commissioned to write a work on the camel. How did they set about it? The Frenchman hied him to Paris, studied the camel in the Zoological Gardens there, and in a short space of time had issued a very readable pamphlet on the subject. The Englishman made his way to Africa, the home of the camel, and, after spending several years there, published in a profound work the result of his observations. And the German? The German, sir, retired to his study, and there resting his head on both arms that he might think without distraction, *meditated on the true inwardness of the camel*. The outcome of these reflections aided, perhaps, by a careful use of a large library, appears as a book in which he reaches the conclusion *that it cannot be positively ascertained whether or not the camel actually exists.*"

An imitation of this Hegelian method, applied to the question of free will, we have seen in the introduction to the article of free will in the *Encyclopedia Americana* — and that is *real history*. We, in our *a-priori* argument do nothing of the kind. We argue from the *intellectual nature of man, as EXPERIENCE reveals him to us*, and we claim that this intellectual nature calls for freedom of his will.

You will readily admit that the nature of man would be *incomplete* if he had only *understanding* and no *will*. Mind, I do not say "*free will*," but simply *will*. Of what use would it be to man to be capable of intellectually grasping what is *good* for him, if he had no *appetitive* faculty to strive after this apprehended good? Man endowed with intellect but without will is what a bird would be without wings. Man's intellect, therefore, postulates will. Now this inference from intellect to will is only preparatory to my proof for free will.

## **Free Will the Necessary Complement of Man's Rational Nature.**

The argument, then, is this: Owing to his rational nature, man is capable of objectively indifferent judgments, *i. e.*, of judgments which exhibit motives both for striving after and for rejecting any particular line of action. But these objectively indifferent judgments are to no purpose, unless man's rational appetency or will is actively indifferent, *i. e.*, unless his will is free. Therefore man's will *is* free.

The major proposition of this syllogism needs no further comment, as I have explained and proved it sufficiently when speaking on the conditions for free choice. Not only is man capable of objectively indifferent judgments, but all his judgments referring to any finite good are objectively indifferent, at least virtually and equivalently.

In the minor proposition we claim that this objective indifference of the judgment calls for active indifference or freedom of the will. Before proving it, let me illustrate its meaning.

## **The Watch Without Face and Hands.**

Suppose you had never seen a watch. You come into a jewelry store and see there a clever artificer putting together the parts of a peculiar mechanical device, which we now call a watch. He has finished it all except that he has not yet added face and hands. Studying this peculiar machine you come to the conclusion that its various parts are so arranged as to move a hand, if there were any, once in twelve hours over a dial, if this again were added. You turn to the artisan and tell him of your conclusion, asking him, whether he is not going to finish his work by adding face and hands. To your surprise he answers No. You insist that everything in the machine points to a face and hands as complementary parts without which the machine must remain incomplete. He answers that yours is an *a-priori* speculation which he is not going to realize. Urging your point you say that perhaps only this individual machine is to remain without face and hands, and there might be sufficient reason for that. He replies, that he has made such mechanical devices by the thousands, but all without face and hands; and he shows you all the would-be watches he has stored up for sale, emphasizing that neither he nor anybody else is going to realize your *a-priori* speculation. What would you think of such an artificer, and what of such a machine? The former is foolish and the latter is incomplete, telling of the folly of its maker. I am sure you realize the drift of my argument for free will.

## **Man is a Work of Art.**

Man is a work of art. As far as my argument is concerned I do not care whether you admit or no that God is the artist from whose hands he proceeded. Study his intellectual nature. He is capable of grasping the end as end, and means as means. Whenever the end is a finite good, he realizes its desirability and its non-necessity. He realizes that there are, for the most part, various means to these ends, each of them leading to the end, none of them in particular necessary. You ask the artist from whose hands man proceeded: "Has this intellectual being the power to choose between the various means?" The artist answers: "No, he is necessitated in all his actions." You urge: "Of what use is it to man that he can intellectually weigh the motives for and against an action? If his judgment is objectively indifferent, why is his will inexorably determined?" The artist answers that yours is an *a priori* speculation; the fact is, that man's will is not free. What do you think of the artist, and what of the work of his hands? The former is foolish and the latter is just as incomplete as the watch without face and hands.

I said that the intellectual nature of man would be to no purpose without freedom of the will. But let me, for the moment, play the part of the pessimist. Man's intellectual nature, it is true, is not to the purpose which it seems to have; nevertheless it is to some purpose, viz., to make man feel miserable. The king of visible creation, studying that wonderful endowment of his by which he is distinguished from the brute, realizes on the one hand, that he *should* be the *master of his own actions*, on the other hand that *as a matter of fact* he is like the brute, *the slave of the greater momentary attraction*. He becomes painfully aware that what he *ought* to do is *impossible*, that *virtue and vice are fated* both in himself and his fellow creatures, that he is a *king without a crown*, and this adds to the plaintive dirge of human misery. Now I am not a pessimist, nor an optimist, but a rational creature, and I think it lawful to conclude the *fact* of freedom, if the nature of man shows that he *should* be free, and that without free will man would be the most miserable of creatures.

But what if there *exists* an all-wise and all-loving God! Remember that the existence of God can be demonstrated completely without using the free will of man as a premise. If there is a God, He must be all-loving and

all-wise. And if God is all-loving and all-wise, He cannot create an intellectual being, His very image and likeness, without that endowment which is necessary to complete its intellectual nature. God cannot distort His own image, He cannot create rational man without free will.

## The Argument Ostracised.

Now what do the determinists say to this argument? They ignore it. We live in an era of positive facts; men are so busy measuring everything in terms of matter and motion that they have neither time nor appreciation for *a-priori* reasonings, unless forsooth they can employ them a la Hegel, to dispute inconvenient facts. Thus it has come to pass that this time-honored Scholastic argument has been completely ostracised from modern philosophical literature.

It is therefore well for us to emphasise its value. The Scholastics called it, as they did all *a-priori* proofs, by the name of "demonstratio propter quid" in opposition to the moral proof, which, being *a-posteriori*, is known as a "demonstratio quia" That is not Ciceronian Latin, but it pithily expresses the valuation of these two proofs. *A-posteriori* evidence shows that man is free, but it does not reveal the root of his freedom; hence the name "demonstratio quia" (*quia* = that). The *a-priori* argument, besides showing the "that" also reveals the "why and wherefore" i. e., the root of freedom; hence the name "demonstratio propter quid" (*propter quid* = why or wherefore).

As "science" does not consist in merely recording and accumulating facts, but inquires into their causes, you will not be surprised that the *a-priori* proof for free will was valued highest by the Scholastics, unless of course you have the Hegelian caricature of "*a-priori* proof" in mind. But in our "matter-of-fact" era the direct and immediate experimental proof will be valued more highly than either the *a-posteriori* or *a-priori* demonstration, and hence we put it in the first place. Whilst all three proofs establish the doctrine of free will beyond all reasonable doubt, each one of them has its peculiar value. The first emphasizes free will as *an experimental fact*, the second as the *indispensable basis of morality*, the third as the *necessary complement of man's rational nature*.

## A Theological Difficulty.

Before dismissing the subject we must briefly discuss a difficulty which most naturally finds its place here, as in the third argument we were led to the consideration of the all-wise and all-loving God. It is claimed that free will is irreconcilable with God's foreknowledge of man's future actions. The problem is indeed a puzzle for a beginner in philosophy, and it is not easy to make its solution clear to men not accustomed to abstract reasoning. A comprehensive treatment of the subject is impossible without entering into a number of questions proper to Natural Theology. The following considerations, therefore, must suffice.

*God foresees our future actions because we perform them and not vice versa, i. e.,* it is false to say that we perform these acts because God foresees them. To explain: Whenever we perform any action, whether freely or not, *whilst we do so* we cannot at the same time be not-performing them. Thus there is surely a kind of necessity in all our actions, even in the freest. But this necessity *follows and supposes the act*; hence in the case of a free action, it supposes free choice. Such necessity is called "necessitas consequens" or "necessitas ex suppositioned i. e., consequent necessity or necessity arising from a supposition. The only necessity which is really incompatible with freedom is that which *precedes* the act, i. e., the necessity which is brought to bear on the *faculty before performing the act*, and this is called *antecedent necessity (necessitas antecedents)*. Now, we know on the infallible testimony of consciousness that we are not governed in the acts of our will (i. e., not in *all* of them) by *antecedent* necessity, but that, on the contrary, we are the masters of such actions. *Consequent* necessity is found (in virtue of the principle of contradiction) in all our actions, whether free or not, whether present, past, or future. *Supposing* a free action is, has been, or will be freely performed, it is *in virtue of that supposition* necessary, and hence can be the object of certain and infallible knowledge. God's *foreknowledge* of our future free actions, and the *infallibility* of this foreknowledge does not, therefore, affect human liberty. Or does the certain knowledge of a *past* free action of mine destroy *its liberty*? Indeed not; for it was not performed because I now know it, but I now know it because I performed it.

Just so it is with God's foreknowledge of our *future* free actions. God foreknows them because we are going to perform them, and not vice versa. The infallibility of God's foreknowledge is therefore quite compatible with our freedom?

This will become still more evident, if we consider that God's knowledge of our future free actions is, strictly speaking, not *foreknowledge*. God's knowledge is *eternal* and as such does not change from *foreknowledge* of the future into *knowledge* of the present, and then into *memory* of the past. That would be an anthropomorphic view of God's knowledge. From the arch of eternity — to use a beautiful figure of St. Thomas Aquinas — past, present and future are equally open to God's vision. If we keep in mind this eternity and unchangeableness of God's vision on the one hand, and on the other the simple distinction between antecedent and consequent necessity, we shall have no difficulty in reconciling man's freedom with God's infallible foreknowledge.

## **Cardinal Newman on Difficulties Versus Doubts.**

Of course this and other difficulties of a metaphysical nature can be urged further, and it is not modern philosophers but the Schoolmen, the staunchest defenders of free will, that have urged them to a very fine point. Even if it is hard for us to follow such speculations accurately and find our bearings in these upper regions of Metaphysics unerringly, there is a general consideration which solves all such difficulties *in globo*.

I think it is Cardinal Newman who is credited with the wise saying: "Ten thousand difficulties do not make a doubt." Let me illustrate its meaning. We all know that a blade of grass grows in springtime. You cannot deny the fact. But can you explain it? You may say that the grass grows by assimilating matter from without. But what is assimilation? Who can explain its wonderful process? Who is able to explain that wonderful microscopically little being, which we call a living cell, a veritable microcosm, full of wonders? As long as it remains unexplained, the growth of a blade of grass is a mystery. Now suppose a metaphysician comes along and informs you of his *a-priori* speculation, namely, that assimilation is impossible (of course because he fails to understand it); that consequently a blade of grass cannot possibly grow, and therefore does not grow. What do you think of this difficulty, against what you know to be a fact of everyday experience?

You realize now the wisdom contained in Cardinal Newman's saying. Only a fool will doubt the growth of a blade of grass because he cannot see how it grows. It would be just as absurd to let any difficulty, especially of a

metaphysical nature, shake your firm adhesion to the doctrine of free will, which, as we have seen, is an undeniable *experimental fact*, the indispensable *basis of morality*, and the *necessary complement of man's rational nature*.

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